



## Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

### **Disaster Preparedness –Action Steps to Prevent or Minimize the Impact of a Disaster**

#### **Determine the disaster risks to your property and community**

- Every community is vulnerable to the threat of disasters.
- Certain parts of the United States are particularly vulnerable to hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes.
- In West Virginia, storm flooding is our major disaster threat, but it is clearly not our only concern. Winter and other severe weather, house and wildfires, hazardous material spills, drought, and mudslides are among the disaster threats that can impact West Virginia.
- While West Virginia may not be considered a major target for terrorism, we can not dismiss the possibility that a terrorist attack could occur in or impact West Virginia.
- In addition West Virginia faces the possibility of an epidemic outbreak of certain human diseases such as West Nile Virus or animal diseases such as Avian Influenza.
- Determining the disaster risks to your property and community is an important first step in a series of action steps that need to be taken to prevent or minimize the impact of a disaster, and to better prepare your family to respond to a disaster. You can learn more about the risks you face by:
  - Visiting your County Office of Emergency Services to determine what types of disasters are most likely to happen in your community. You can ask to review the All Hazard Mitigation Plan for your community, a copy of which may also be located in your public library.
  - Assessing your vulnerability to different disaster threats. For example, you can determine if your property is located in a flood plain or in an area prone to mudslides. The specific location of your home might make it more vulnerable to wildfires (if you are located close to a wooded area) or the impact of a winter storm (if you live in an isolated area that can be cut off by a severe storm). Hazardous material spills can be a particular concern if you live close to an interstate highway or a railroad track.

#### **Investigate opportunities to prevent or minimize the impact of disasters**

- For each disaster threat there are numerous things that you can do to prevent or minimize the potential impact of the disaster. A detailed description of such proactive measures can be found in this manual under the disaster topics (floods, winter storms, etc).
- There certain measures that are relevant to all disasters including:
  - Creating a family disaster plan
  - Preparing a family disaster supply kit
  - Preparing a disaster evacuation supply kit
  - Preparing your children for disasters
  - Making special provisions for the elderly and people with disabilities
  - Including pets in your disaster plans
  - Buying insurance and conducting a household inventory
  - Protecting important papers and records
  - Finding hazards in the home
  - Buying a NOAA Weather Radio

Information on each of these topics will be covered in this General Disaster Preparedness Section.

*Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency entitled “Are You Ready?: A Guide to Citizen Preparedness”*